

Monna Vanna
A Drama in Three Acts
By Maurice Maeterlinck
Translated by Alfred Sutro



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Twelfth Thousand

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It is common knowledge that the Lord Chamberlain, acting through the official censor, refused to grant a license for the performance of *Menna Vanna*. This embargo has now been removed; and, largely owing to the enterprise of Mr. J. T. Grein, the first public performance was given at the Queen's Theatre on the 21st July 1914, under his management, and with the following cast :—

<i>GUIDO COLONNA</i> . . .	Mr. NORMAN MCKINNELL
<i>MARCO COLONNA</i> . . .	Mr. J. FISHER-WHITE
<i>PRINZIVALLE</i> . . .	Mr. LIONEL ATWILL
<i>BORSO</i>	Mr. MONTAGU LOVE
<i>TORELLO</i>	Mr. HOWARD STURGE
<i>TRIVULZIO</i>	Mr. IVAN BERLYN
<i>VEDIO</i>	Mr. NORMAN HARLE
<i>GIOVANNA</i>	Miss CONSTANCE COLLIER

The Play produced by Mr. LEON M. LEON

It remains only to be said that the appearance of the play on the English stage, some fifteen years after it was written, does not seem to have inflicted any serious damage on public morality.

August 1914.



MONNA VANNA
TRANSLATED BY ALFRED SUTRO

CHARACTERS

GUIDO COLONNA, *Commander of the Pisan garrison.*

MARCO COLONNA, *Guido's father.*

PRINZIVALLE, *General in the pay of Florence.*

BORSO, } *Guido's lieutenants.*
TORELLO, }

TRIVULZIO, *Commissioner of the Florentine Republic.*

VEDIO, *Secretary to Prinzivalle.*

GIOVANNA (MONNA VANNA), *Guido's wife.*

PERIOD—*The end of the Fifteenth Century.*

*The first and third Acts take place in Pisa ;
the second outside the city.*

MONNA VÂNNA

ACT I

A Room in the Palace of GUIDO COLONNA

GUIDO *and his lieutenants*, BORSO *and*
TORELLO, *are standing by an open*
window, from which there is a view
of the country around Pisa.

GUIDO

Our present extremity is so great that the Seigniorie have been compelled to reveal to me disasters they had long kept back. The two armies that Venice despatched to our relief are both hemmed in by the Florentines; the one at Bibbiena, the other at Elci. Chiusi, Montalone, the

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Monna Vanna

passes of the Vernia, Arezzo, and the defiles of the Casentine—these are all held by the enemy. We are isolated and helpless, given over to the hatred of Florence; and Florence is unforgiving when she no longer trembles. Our soldiers, the people, are still unaware of these disasters, but strange rumours are afoot, and daily becoming more definite. What will the Pisans do, when they learn the truth? Their rage will turn upon us, upon the Seignicry; we shall be the first to fall victim to their terror and blind despair. They have endured so much, during this long siege that has lasted more than three months; they have borne their suffering so heroically, that it need not surprise us if famine and misery goad them now to madness. One hope was left to them; that is gone, and, with it, the last vestige of our authority. We shall be powerless.

Monna Vanna

The enemy will batter down our walls,
and Pisa cease to be. . . .

Borso

My men have shot their last arrow;
their ammunition is spent. One may
search the vaults from end to end without
finding an ounce of powder. . . .

Torello

We fired our last cannon ball two days
ago at the batteries of Sant' Antonio;
and even the Stradiotes, who now have
nothing left but their swords, refuse to
man the ramparts. . . .

Borso

From this window the breach can be
seen that Prinzivalle's cannon have made
in our walls. . . . It is fifty paces wide,
a flock of sheep could pass through.
. . . The place is untenable; and the

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Romagnians, the Sclavonians, and the Albanians, have signified their intention to desert in a body, should the capitulation not be signed to-night. . . .

GUIDO

Thrice within the last ten days have the Seigniory sent ancients of the College to treat for capitulation. These have none of them returned. . . .

TORELLO

Prinzivalle does not forgive us the murder of his lieutenant, Antonio Reno, whom the frenzied peasants hacked to death in our streets. Florence avails herself of this murder to proclaim us outside the law, and treat us as barbarians. . . .

GUIDO

I have sent my own father to Prinzivalle to express our profound regret, and

Monna Vanna

explain how powerless we were to control a mob whom hunger had driven frantic. My father was a sacred hostage. He has not yet returned. . . .

BORSO

For more than a week now the city has lain open, and exposed on every side; our walls are a mass of ruin, our cannon silent. Why does Prinzivalle not give the order for assault? Can it be that his courage has failed him, or does he dread some ambush? Florence, perhaps, may have sent mysterious orders. . . .

GUIDO

The orders of Florence are ever mysterious, but her designs are clear. Pisa, by her unswerving loyalty to Venice, has set a dangerous example to the little Tuscan cities; the Republic of Pisa, therefore, must cease to be. . . . Florence

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has displayed rare artifice and cunning. She has contrived, little by little, to embitter this war, to poison it with strange acts of treachery and cruelty, that shall be held to warrant her pitiless revenge. It is not without cause that I suspect her emissaries of having incited our peasants to massacre Reno. So, too, was it part of her scheme to entrust this siege to Prinzivalle, the most barbarous mercenary in her employ—the man who won for himself such sinister fame at the sack of Placenza, where he put every man who bore arms to the sword—though he declared later this was done against his orders!—and sold five thousand free women into slavery. . . .

Borso

Such is the report, I know, but it is not correct. It was not Prinzivalle, but the Florentine Commissioners, who were

Monna Vanna

responsible both for the massacre and the sale. I have never seen Prinzivalle, but one of my brothers knew him well. He is of barbarian origin. His father would seem to have been a Basque or a Breton, who kept a goldsmith's shop in Venice. He is undoubtedly of humble birth, but still not the savage that people hold him. From what I hear he is a dangerous creature, of dissolute habits, fantastic and violent, but, for all that, loyal; and I would unhesitatingly hand him my sword. . . .

GUIDO

Wait till your arm can no longer wield it! And very soon now he will be stirring, and show us what he is! In the meanwhile we have one chance left: such of us, at least, as dare to meet death bravely, and to look it in the face. . . . We must tell the whole truth to

Monna Vanna

the soldiers, the citizens, and the peasants who have found shelter in our walls. They shall learn that no offer of capitulation has been made to us; and that we have not here one of those mimic wars in which two great armies fight from dawn to sunset, leaving three wounded on the field; not a fraternal siege that ends by the victor becoming the guest and the valued friend of the vanquished. This is a bitter struggle for life or death; a struggle in which no mercy is shown; in which our wives and our children . . .

Enter MARCO. GUIDO sees him and rushes eagerly to embrace him

GUIDO

Father! . . . By what happy miracle, what stroke of good fortune in this calamity of ours, have you been restored to us, when I had almost given up hope.

Monna Vanna

. . . You are not wounded? You drag your foot behind you! Have they tortured you? How did you escape? What have they done to you?

MARCO

Nothing. They are not barbarians, thank God! They received me as an honoured guest. Prinzivalle had read my works; he spoke to me of the three dialogues of Plato, that I had found and translated. I am lame, it is true, but then I had far to go, and I am very old. . . . Do you know whom I met in Prinzivalle's tent?

GUIDO

The merciless Commissioners from Florence!

MARCO

Yes, they were there—or, at least, one

Monna Vanna

of them, for I saw only one. . . . But the first name I heard was that of Marsilio Ficino, the man who revealed Plato to the world. . . . Plato would seem to live again in Marsilio Ficino. . . . I would have given ten years of my life to see him, before going whither all must go. . . . We were like two brothers who had come together at last. . . . We spoke of Hesiod, of Homer, Aristotle. . . . Close to the camp, beside the banks of the Arno, he had unearthed, in a grove of olive, the torso of a goddess that had lain buried in the sand: it was so strangely beautiful that if you saw it you would forget the war. We dug on a little further; he found an arm, and I two hands. . . . These hands were so pure, so delicate, they seemed fashioned only for joy and laughter: they were worthy to caress the dawn and spread the dew. . . . One was curved tenderly, as though

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it had lain against a woman's breast; the other still was clasping the handle of a mirror. . . .

GUIDO

Father, father! Let us not forget that, here, people are perishing of hunger, and have little to do with delicate hands, or bronze torsos!

MARCO

This one is of marble. . . .

GUIDO

Be it so! But let us speak rather of the thirty thousand lives to whom a moment's delay, a single imprudent act, spells ruin; whereas a word can save them: a whisper of good news. . . . It was not for a torso or a mutilated hand that you went yonder! What did they say to you? What designs has Florence, or Prinzivalle? Tell us quickly! Why

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do they dally with us? Do you hear those shouts underneath our window? The poor wretches are fighting for the grass that has grown between the stones. . . .

MARCO

You are right. I was forgetting that men were at war with each other now that spring is here and the glad sky smiling upon the earth, and the sea stretching towards the blue like a radiant cup that a goddess presents to the gods of heaven; and the earth so fair and so full of love for men! . . . But you have your joys; I dwell too long on mine. . . . Besides, you are right. I should have told you at once the news that I bring. . . . I bear a message fraught with salvation to thirty thousand lives, and with heavy affliction to one. . . . But this one may find therein most

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noble occasion for glory, of a kind that seems greater to me than all the glories of war. . . . Love for one person is good, and brings its own happiness; but the love that embraces the many is greater and finer still. . . . Virtues that all men admire are good; yet there come days when our eye travels beyond them, and then their value seems less. . . . Listen! . . . And prepare yourself for what I have to say, lest my first words should wring from you one of those oaths that bar our retreat, and enchain the reason that fain would retrace her steps. . . .

GUIDO

[Dismissing his officers with a gesture.]
Leave us!

MARCO

No! Remain. . . . It is our fate, the fate of us all, that we are about to

Monna Vanna

decide! Indeed, I could wish that this room overflowed with the victims whom we shall save! That all the poor wretches to whom we bring comfort might be at the window there, to hear and retain for ever the tidings I bring; for I bring salvation, if reason will but accept it! Nor could ten thousand reasons turn the scale against one overpowering error, whereof I fear the weight the more, inasmuch as I myself . . .

GUIDO

Have done with enigmas, father, I entreat you! What can this matter be that calls for so many words? Tell us all! There is nothing can frighten us now!

MARCO

Be it so, then! Listen! I saw Prinzi-valle; I have had speech with him. . . .

Monna Vanna

It is strange how false is the picture men draw of one whom they hold in dread. . . . I went to him as Priam to the tent of Achilles. I thought to meet a drunken, blood-stained savage—a madman whose only quality was a certain talent for war. . . . For as such had he always been represented to me. . . . I expected to find the incarnate fiend of battle, headstrong and incoherent, vain, debauched, treacherous, cruel. . . .

GUIDO

And Prinzivalle is all this, save that he be no traitor!

BORSO

Nay, traitor he is not; and, though he serve Florence, his loyalty is unstained. . . .

MARCO

The man I met bowed down before

Monna Vanna

me as though he were my disciple, and I the master whom he revered. He is learned, studious, wise, eager in search of knowledge. He listens patiently, and his eyes are open to all things that are beautiful. He is humane and generous, and has no liking for war; he is conscientious and sincere, the reluctant servant of a perfidious Republic. The hazards of life—destiny, it may be—made him a soldier, and hold him captive still to a glory that he detests, and fain would abandon, but not before he has gratified a desire; a fearful desire, such as would seem to fall on some men who are born beneath the perilous star of a great, unique, and unrealisable love. . . .

GUIDO

Father, father, you forget that men who are dying of hunger can ill brook this delay! What are this man's qualities

Monna Vanna

to us? You speak of salvation; give
us the word you promised!

MARCO

It is true. I do wrong to hesitate;
for cruel as this thing may be to the
two creatures I love best of all on this
earth . . .

GUIDO

My share I accept, though it be what
it may; but who is the other?

MARCO

Listen, I will. . . . As I entered this
room it seemed strange and difficult to
me; and yet the chance of salvation was
so overwhelming. . . .

GUIDO

Speak!

Monna Vanna

MARCO

Florence is determined on our annihilation. The decemvirs of war have judged it necessary, the Seigniorship have approved their decree; the decision is irrevocable. But Florence is too prudent, too wise in her hypocrisy, to allow the world that she is civilising to lay the charge of indiscriminate bloodshed at her door. She will declare, therefore, that we refused the merciful capitulation she had offered. The city will be taken by assault; Spanish and German mercenaries will be hurled against her. And these need no urging, when there is chance of pillage or burning, of rapine or slaughter! One has only to let the muzzle hang loosely: and the leaders, that day, will take care to seem helpless, to have lost all control. . . . Such is the fate held in store for us; and the city of the red lily

Monna Vanná

will be the first to deplore the disaster, and will ascribe it wholly to the unforeseen licence of the foreign mercenaries, whom she will disband with every expression of horror, so soon as our ruin shall enable her to dispense with their services. . . .

GUIDO

Yes. That is the way of Florence. . .

MARCO

Such are the private instructions that Prinzivalle has received from the Commissioners of the Republic. Day after day, this last week, they have urged him to deliver the final assault. Hitherto he has delayed it under various pretexts. Further, he has intercepted letters wherein the Commissioners, who spy upon his every movement, accuse him of treachery to the Seigniory. Pisa destroyed, and

Monna Vanna

the war over, condemnation, torture, and death await him in Florence, as they have awaited more than one dangerous general. So that he knows his fate. . . .

GUIDO

Very well then, what does he propose?

MARCO

He is certain—as far, at least, as one can be certain where these shifty savages are concerned—of a fair proportion of the archers, whom he himself enrolled. But, in any event, he has a bodyguard of a hundred men, who are devoted to him; and on these he can absolutely rely. His proposal is that all who may choose to follow him shall be brought into Pisa, and help to defend her against the army he will abandon. . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

It is not men we need; and these dangerous auxiliaries do not tempt us. Let him give us bullets, provisions, powder.

MARCO

He foresaw that his offer might appear suspicious to you, and perhaps be rejected. He will undertake, therefore, to pass into the city a convoy of three hundred waggons, laden with ammunition and food, that have just entered his camp.

GUIDO

How can he do this?

MARCO

I know not. The ways of war and

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politics are strange to me. But he does what he will. . . . The Florentine Commissioners notwithstanding, he is absolute master in his camp so long as the Seigniorie have not removed him from his command. And this they dare not do on the eve of victory, in the midst of an army that has faith in him, and already clutches its prey. Florence must wait her hour!

GUIDO

Good—I understand; he saves us that he may save himself. He seeks revenge. But this, I imagine, could be achieved in other fashions, and more skilfully too. What can his interest be in saving his enemies? Whither will he go, and what will become of him? What does he demand in return?

MARCO

The moment has come, my son, when

Monna Vanna

words turn cruel and all-powerful, when two or three syllables suddenly borrow the force of destiny, and fasten upon their victims. . . . I tremble when I think that the sound of my voice, the way in which I may say what has to be said, can cause so many deaths, or save so many lives. . . .

GUIDO

Why do you hesitate? . . . The cruellest words can add nothing to such a misfortune as ours. . . .

MARCO

I have told you that Prinzivalle seems wise; that he is reasonable, humane. . . . But where is the man so wise as to have no moment of folly; so virtuous as never to have harboured some monstrous idea within him? . . . Are not our reason, our pity and justice, for ever at war

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with desire, with passion, with the madness that lies so near to our soul? . . . I, myself, have succumbed more than once, and I shall again, and so, perhaps, will you. . . . For it happens thus with us all! A sorrow awaits you that should be no sorrow perhaps, could you consider it rightly. . . . And I who see so clearly its lack of proportion to the wrong that will cause it, I, for my part, have made a promise still more foolish than is this foolish sorrow. . . . And my foolish promise will be foolishly kept by the sage I fain would be; the sage who ventures to speak in the name of reason. . . . Should you reject this offer, I have undertaken to return to the enemy's camp. . . . And what will await me there? Death and torture will probably be the reward of my absurd loyalty. . . . And none the less I shall go. . . . Well aware as I am that folly remains folly

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still, though we trick it in purple, I still shall do the foolish thing I deplore; for I, also, lack the strength that he must possess who would listen to reason alone. . . . But I have not yet told you. Ah, see how I lose my thread, how I weave phrase after phrase, pile word upon word, to retard, be it ever so little, the moment that must decide! But I wrong you perhaps, by my doubts. . . . See then! This mighty convoy that my own eyes have beheld; these waggons laden with corn and wine and fruit; these flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, enough, and more than enough, to feed a people for weeks; these barrels of powder and bars of lead with which Florence may be overcome and prosperity brought back to Pisa; all these shall be introduced this very night into our city if you will send in exchange and deliver to Prinzivalle—and she shall return with

Monna Vanna

the first rays of dawn—but he demands in token of victory and submission, that she come alone, and clad only in her mantle. . . .

GUIDO

Who? Who is to go? You have not told me. . . .

MARCO

Giovanna.

GUIDO

What! My wife? . . . Vanna? . . .

MARCO

Yes, your Vanna. . . . At last I have said it!

GUIDO

But, why Vanna? Are there not a thousand women?

Monna Vanna

MARCO

It is because she is the most beautiful,
and he loves her. . . .

GUIDO

He loves her! . . . Where has he
seen her? He does not know her!

MARCO

He has seen her. He knows her, but
would not say when or how. . . .

GUIDO

But she, has she seen him? Where
have they met?

MARCO

She has never seen him, or, at least,
she does not remember. . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

How do you know this!

MARCO

She told me herself. . . .

GUIDO

What!

MARCO

Before I came here to you. . . .

GUIDO

And you told her?

MARCO

All. . . .

GUIDO

What! you cannot have dared to hint
at this infamous bargain?

Monna Vanna

MARCO

Yes. . . .

GUIDO

And she said?

MARCO

Nothing. . . . Her face grew white:
she left me. . . .

GUIDO

Ah, she did well! . . . That was better perhaps than loading you with reproaches, and throwing herself at your feet. . . . Yes, that was better. . . . She turned white and left you. . . . So would an angel have done; that is like Vanna. . . . What was there to say? Nothing! And we, too, shall say nothing. . . . Come, my friends, we will return to the ramparts, and die, at least, since die we must, without staining ourselves with dishonour. . . .

Monna Vanna

MARCO

Ah, Guido, the ordeal is terrible, I know! Now that the blow has fallen let us be patient, and give reason time to discriminate between duty and private sorrow! . . .

GUIDO

Duty! My duty is clear. Your monstrous offer entails one duty on me, and one duty alone. I need no time to reflect.

MARCO

And yet must you ask yourself whether you have a right to sacrifice a whole people; whether thousands of lives be not too high a price to pay. . . . Did your happiness alone depend on this choice I could understand your preferring death; though to me who am near the end of life; to me who have

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seen many men and therefore much human sorrow, to me there can be no moral or physical evil that is not preferable to death, cold and horrible death, with its eternal silence. . . . And here many thousands of lives are at stake; here your brothers in arms are concerned, their wives and children! . . . If you yield to a madman's frenzy, then the thing that seems monstrous to you shall be called heroic by those who come after. For they will judge with calmer eyes, with more justice, and more humanity. . . . Believe me, nothing can equal the saving of life. Virtues, ideals, all that we know as honour and loyalty, are mere trifles compared with that. . . . Your one desire now is to face this ordeal like a hero, to let it pass and leave no stain; but it is wrong to believe that death is the loftiest peak of heroism. . . . The most heroic deed is the one that costs

Monna Vanna

us most, and death is often far easier
than life. . . .

GUIDO

Are you my father?

MARCO

Yes, and proud to be your father. . . .
In opposing you to-day I oppose myself
also, and I should love you less did you
submit too readily. . . .

GUIDO

Yes, you are my father, you have given
your proof; for you, too, shall choose
death for your share; and since I reject
this loathsome compact, you shall return
to the enemy's camp, and there meet
the fate that Florence reserves for
you. . . .

MARCO

My son, here I alone am concerned—

Monna Vanna

a feeble and useless old man, with few years to live, a man of no value to any—and therefore did I tell myself that I might still humour an ancient folly, nor struggle to do what I know should be done if one indeed sought to be wise. . . . I know not why I shall go yonder. . . . My soul has remained too young in this old body of mine; and I belong to a time in which reason had little to say. . . . But I regret that so many influences of the past should keep me from breaking a foolish promise. . . .

GUIDO

I shall act like you. . . .

MARCO

What do you mean?

GUIDO

I shall follow your example. I, too,

Monna Vanna

shall remain faithful to those influences of the past that you now regard as absurd, though you fortunately still permit them to govern your conduct. . . .

MARCO

Where others are concerned I cast them from me; and since it appears that your soul demands my encouragement, demands the poor sacrifice of my word, then I renounce in my heart the fulfilment of my promise, and, come what may, and decide as you will, I shall not return yonder. . . .

GUIDO

Enough! There are things a son must not say to an erring father. . . .

MARCO

Say what you would, my son: let

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your indignant words flow freely from
your heart. . . . I shall regard them as
the token of your most legitimate grief.
. . . Words cannot alter my love for
you. . . . But, while cursing me, let
reason and gentle pity take the place in
your soul of the maledictions that leave
it. . . .

GUIDO

Enough: I will hear no more. . . .
Think; and try to consider what it is
you would have me do. For at this
moment it is you who are lacking in
reason, in noble and lofty reason; you
whose wisdom is troubled by the fear of
death. . . . Death does not frighten me.
. . . I can still remember the time when
you enjoined courage upon me, before
your own was weakened by age and
the vain study of books. . . . We are
alone in this room. No one has beheld

Monna Vanna

your pitiful weakness; and my two lieutenants and I will keep the secret that we shall, alas, not have to keep very long. We shall bury all this in our hearts; and now let us turn our thoughts to the final struggle. . . .

MARCO

No, my son, buried it cannot be; for years, and the studies that you deem so vain, have taught me that it can never be right, whatever the reason, to bury the life of a single man; and though I indeed should no longer possess the courage that alone finds favour in your eyes, I still have another, less dazzling, perhaps, less highly esteemed by men, since it achieves less, and men admire most that which brings suffering to them. . . . This will enable me to accomplish the rest of my duty. . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO.

And what may that duty be?

MARCO

I shall complete what I have so unsuccessfully begun. . . . You were one of the judges, but not the only judge; and all those whose life or death hangs on this hour have a right to know their fate, and to be told upon what their salvation depends. . . .

GUIDO

I do not understand you. At least, I hope I do not. You were saying . . .

MARCO

That on leaving this room I shall at once inform the people of the offer that Prinzivalle has made and you have rejected. . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

It is well! Now I understand. I regret that idle words should have brought us to this, as I regret also that your delusions should compel me to be wanting in the respect that is due to your age. . . . But it is a son's duty to protect a deluded father against himself; and while Pisa stands I am master here, and the custodian of her honour. . . . Borso and Torello, I entrust my father to your care, until such time as his conscience shall reawaken within him. Nothing has happened! . . . No one shall know. . . . Father, I forgive you; and you will forgive me, too, when, at the last hour, you remember how you once taught me to become master of myself, and unafraid. . . .

MARCO

I have no need to wait for the last

Monna Vanna

hour in order to forgive you, my son.
. . . I should have acted like you. . . .
And you may imprison me, but not my
secret; for that is free, and can no longer
be stifled. . . .

GUIDO

What is this? What is this you say?

MARCO

That at this very moment Prinzi-
valle's proposal is being discussed by the
Seigniory. . . .

GUIDO

The Seigniory! Who can have told
them?

MARCO

I told them before I came here. . . .

GUIDO

You! No. No, it is impossible!

Monna Vanna

However great your fear, or the havoc that age has wrought in your heart, you cannot have delivered the one joy of my soul, my love, the beauty and purity of our wedded life, into the hands of strangers, miserable shopkeepers, who would weigh it and measure it as though it were salt or oil ! . . . I cannot believe it. . . . I shall not, till my own eyes have seen it. . . . And then I shall look upon you, you the father whom I loved and thought I knew, whom I took as my model, I shall look on you with no less horror and hatred than I do on the vile and cowardly monster who has besmirched us to-day with all this infamy !

MARCO

You speak truly, my son. You do not know me ; and for that I am to blame. When old age came upon me I did not tell you what I learned from it

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every day concerning life and love, and the joys and sorrows of men. . . . Had I acquainted you sooner with all that was passing in my heart, with all the vanities that were slowly departing, and the truths that were taking their place, then should I not be standing before you to-day like some unhappy stranger whom you are beginning to hate. . . .

GUIDO

At least I rejoice that I did know you sooner. . . . And for the rest . . . it is not difficult to foretell what the Seigniorly will decide. To save themselves they have only to sacrifice one man, and it is so simple! Such a temptation would bend a nobler courage than one has the right to expect from these poor traders. And yet, let them beware! That is asking too much. That is more than they have a right to ask. I have shed

Monna Vanna.

my blood for them; by day and by night have I toiled and endured; through this whole long siege I have never spared myself. But that is enough: and I will do no more! Vanna is mine! She belongs to me, and I am yet in command! My Stradiotes will at least remain faithful; I have three hundred men who will listen to me alone, and turn a deaf ear to the counsels of cowards!

MARCO

You are in error, my son. The Seignior of Pisa, the citizens whom you speak of so slightingly, before even knowing what their decision may be, have in this crisis given proof of an admirable nobility and courage. They have refused to owe their safety to the sacrifice of a woman's love; and as I left them and hastened to you, they were summoning

Monna Vanna

Vanna, to tell her that they placed in her hands the fate of the city. . . .

GUIDO

What! They have dared! In my absence, they have dared to repeat to her the foul words of that loathsome satyr! . . . My Vanna! . . . When I think of her tender face, that takes fire at a glance, of the watchful modesty, that renders her beauty lovelier still! My Vanna to have stood before these lecherous old men, these little pale-faced hypocritical traders, who have always regarded her as something holy! "Go," they will have said to her, "go yonder, naked and alone, to the barbarian's tent! Do his bidding!" Ah truly, it was noble indeed that they used no violence! They knew that I am still here. They ask *her* consent, you say! And mine—who will dare ask mine?

Monna Vanna

MARCO

Have I not done so, my son? And if you refuse me they will come in their turn! . . .

GUIDO

Let them! Vanna will have spoken for us both. . . .

MARCO

I trust that it may be so, and that you will accept her answer. . . .

GUIDO

Her answer! Can you doubt it, you who know her, who have seen her every day since the one, when, with smiles of love in her eyes, she first crossed the threshold of this very room, in which now you wish to sell her? You doubt, her answer? . . .

Monna Vanna

MARCO

My son, each of us sees only in others what he sees in himself, and knows himself only to the extent of his own consciousness. . . .

GUIDO

That is doubtless why I knew you so ill! But rather than that these eyes of mine should a second time be so cruelly deceived, I would pray God that they be closed for ever!

MARCO

They may be about to open, my son, beneath a very great light. . . . I say this because I have noticed a certain strength in Vanna that you have not seen, and it is this that leaves me in no doubt as to what her reply will be. . . .

Monna Vanna.

GUIDO

You have no doubt! Ah, believe me, neither have I! And I accept her reply in advance, blindly, irrevocably! If it be not the same as mine, then have we both been deceived in each other from the very first hour unto this one of sorrow. . . . And our love will have been a mere lie, that now crumbles to dust; and all I adored in her will have existed only in this poor credulous head of mine, in this poor faithful heart that knew of one happiness only and worshipped a phantom. . . .

[*Cries of "Vanna, Vanna" arise from the crowd outside, at first as a murmur, and then growing louder and louder. The door, at back, opens, and VANNA, alone and pale, advances into the room, while men and women, who seem afraid to enter, try to*

Monna Vanna

*hide themselves against the door.
GUIDO sees her, and rushes towards
her. He throws his arms round her
and embraces her feverishly.*

GUIDO

My Vanna! . . . What have they done, what have they said to you! . . . No, no, do not tell me. . . . I need only look into your eyes—there all is still pure and loyal, like a spring in which angels bathe. . . . Ah, those foolish men! They could harm nothing of what I loved; they have been like children throwing stones into the air, and imagining they could reach the blue! . . . As they gazed into your eyes their words will have shrivelled on their lips. . . . You had no need to answer—you will merely have looked at them. . . . And then, between them and you, between their thoughts and yours,

Monna Vanna

a lake will have arisen, an illimitable ocean of life and love. . . . But see, there is one here, a man whom I call father. . . . He sinks his head; his white hairs hide it. . . . We must forgive him; he is old and blind. We must be merciful; we must make a great effort; your eyes say nothing to him—he is so far from us! . . . He has become a stranger; our love has passed over his sad old age like an April shower that falls upon flints. . . . Our love is nothing to him; it has all escaped him. . . . He thinks that we love as they love who know not what the word means. . . . He cannot understand, he needs words. . . . Give him words; give him your answer!

VANNA

[*Approaching MARCO.*] My father, I shall go to-night.

Monna Vanna

MARCO

[*Kissing her brow.*] My daughter, I know. . . .

GUIDO

What! What do you say?

VANNA

Guido, I shall go. I must; I must obey. . . .

GUIDO

Obey? obey whom? Tell me!

VANNA

I shall go to Prinzivalle's tent to-night. . . .

GUIDO

To die with him, to kill him? That had not occurred to me. Yes, yes, I can understand that!

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Were I to kill him our city would not
be saved. . . .

GUIDO

What! You, you love him then!
Since when do you love him?

VANNA

I do not know him; I have never seen
him. . . .

GUIDO

But you have heard. Yes, yes, you
have heard, people have told you. . . .

VANNA

Nothing. Some one said just now
that he was a very old man. . . .

GUIDO

He is not! He is young, he is hand-

Monna Vanna

some, much younger than I. God! had he asked anything else I would have gone to him, crawled on my hands and knees, to save our city! Or wandered away with her and spent the rest of our life, unknown and forgotten, begging for alms at the cross-roads! . . . But this, this! Never in the history of the world has a conqueror dared— [*Going to VANNA and flinging his arms round her.*] Ah, Vanna, my Vanna, I cannot believe it! It is not your voice that I heard, but my father's, and his alone! No, I have heard nothing; all is as it was. . . . You shall tell me that I am mistaken, that your love, that all that was you, cried out, "No, no!" blushing at having to speak! . . . I tell you I have heard nothing, nothing; the silence has been unbroken. . . . But, see, now you must speak. . . . All are listening. . . . No one has heard. . . . All are waiting for

Monna Vanna

the word that you must say. . . . Say it quickly, Vanna, that they may know you! Quickly! Declare our love, and dispel this dream. . . . Speak the word I wait for, the word that must be spoken if all things are not to crumble into ruins around me! . . .

VANNA

O Guido, I know how hard it must be to bear. . . .

GUIDO

[*Instinctively thrusting her from him.*]
How hard it must be! You know, you know? Have I not to bear it all, I who loved? You never have loved me! No, I begin to see! What am I to make of all this? You are glad to leave me; you love this man, who knows! Ah, but here I still am the master, say what they will! . . . And you think I shall stand calmly by and let these things be? Beneath

Monna Vanna

this room is a dungeon, a dark, cold
dungeon, and there you shall stay while
my Stradiotes keep watch, until such time
as your heroism shall have cooled, and
you learn where your duty lies. . . .
Take her away! . . . I have spoken; it
is my command! Go, and obey!

VANNA

Guido, Guido, I need surely not tell
you . . .

GUIDO

They do not obey! No one here to
do my bidding! You, Borso, Torello,
have your arms turned to stone? Can
my voice not make itself heard? . . .
You, down there, you others, who stand
and listen, can you not hear me? I
shout to them: they do not move. . . .
Take her away, I say! . . . Away, away!
. . . Ah, I see what it is! They are

Monna Vanna

afraid; they want to live—to live, that is all they care for! I must die that they may live; but not that way! . . . No, no, that were surely too easy. . . . Here am I alone against the crowd, and I am to pay for it all. . . . Why I, and not you! You all have wives! . . . [*Half drawing his sword and approaching VANNA.*] And what if I prefer death to dishonour? . . . That had not occurred to you! . . . But, see, I have only to raise my hand——

VANNA

If your love bids you, Guido. . . .

GUIDO

“If your love bids you”! Ah, yes, speak of love, you who never have known what it means! You, in whose soul there can never have been any love! Now as I look at you I see a

Monna Vanna

desert—a desert where all is swallowed up, parched and dying . . . not even a tear, not a tear! . . . What was I, what was I to you? A man whose arms offered shelter, that was all! . . . Had you but for an instant . . .

VANNA

Guido, look at me, look at me! Can you not see? What shall I say to you, Guido? Have I words to tell what I feel? Let me speak but one single word and all my strength goes! . . . I cannot. . . . I love you, I owe everything to you! . . . And yet I shall go, I must, I must. . . .

GUIDO

[*Thrusting her from him.*] It is well! Go; get you hence! Go to him, I give you up. Go! You are mine no longer. . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

[*Seizing his hand.*] Guido! . . .

GUIDO

[*Pushing her away.*] Ah, do not clutch at me with those warm, soft hands. . . . My father was right; he knew you better. . . . Father, here she is. This is your work, finish it now to the end. . . . Lead her to this man's tent. I shall stay here and watch you go off together. . . . But do not imagine that I claim a share in the bread and meat she will buy. . . . There remains but one thing for me, and that you shall know very soon. . . .

VANNA

[*Clinging to him.*] Guido, look at me; do not turn your eyes from me—that is

Monna Vanna

too dreadful. . . . Let me see your eyes,
Guido. . . .

GUIDO

See then! Look into my eyes, and
read. . . . Go, I know you no longer!
Time presses—out yonder he waits: night
is falling. . . . Go! what have you to
fear? I shall not kill myself. I am
not mad; it is only when love is trium-
phant that reason totters, not when it
falls into ruins. . . . I have gazed into
the very depths of love, aye, of love
and fidelity. . . . I have no more
to say. No, no, unclasp your fingers;
they cannot retain a vanishing love. All
is over, finished, done with; there re-
mains not a trace! . . . The past is
engulfed, and the future too. . . . Ah,
yes, those pure white fingers, those noble
eyes, those lips; there was a time when
I believed. . . . Now nothing remains.

Monna Vanna

. . . [*Casting VANNA's hands from him.*]
Nothing, nothing, less than nothing!
Farewell, Vanna! Get you gone. Fare-
well. . . . You go yonder? . . .

VANNA

Yes. . . .

GUIDO

You will not return? . . .

VANNA

Yes, I shall return. . . .

GUIDO

As to that, we shall see. . . . Ah,
we shall see. . . . Who could have
told me that my father knew her better
than I! . . .

[*He totters, and clings to one of the
marble columns. VANNA goes
out slowly and alone, without
another glance at him.*]

ACT II

PRINZIVALLE'S Tent

Sumptuous disorder. Hangings of silk and gold. Arms and precious furs are strewn about the place. Great chests lie half open, revealing quantities of jewels and glittering stuffs. The entrance to the tent is from the back, through a heavy curtain. PRINZIVALLE, standing by a table, is arranging documents, plans, and arms. Enter VEDIO.

VEDIO

Here is a letter from the Commissioner of the Republic.

From Trivulzio?

VEDIO

Yes. Messer Maladura, the second Commissioner, has not yet returned.

PRINZIVALLE

The Venetian army, that threatens Florence from the Casentine, is probably offering unexpected resistance. Give me the letter. [*He takes it and reads.*] He sends me the formal command, under penalty of immediate arrest, and for the very last time, to deliver the assault at dawn. . . . It is well. The night, at least, is mine. . . . Immediate arrest. . . . Ah, how little they know! . . . Do they really imagine that stale, hackneyed words like these can bring terror to the man who awaits the unique

calumny, trial, judgment—what is all this to me? . . . They would have arrested me long ago, had they been able, had they dared. . . .

VEDIO

Messer Trivulzio told me, as he gave me the letter, that he would follow. He desires to speak with you. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Ah, so he has made up his mind at last. . . . Our interview will decide many things; and this wizened little scribe, who stands here for all the occult power of Florence, and yet dare not raise his eyes to mine; this wretched, pale-faced dwarf who hates me more than death, shall spend an hour he has not looked for. . . . Grave orders must

guards are at my door?

VEDIO

Two old soldiers of your Galician band. I thought I recognised Hernando, and the other, I believe, is Diego.

PRINZIVALLE

Good; they would obey me, those two, did I tell them to put all the saints of heaven in chains. . . . It is growing dark, have the lamp lit. What is the time?

VEDIO

It is past nine.

PRINZIVALLE

Marco Colonna has not returned?

VEDIO

The sentries at the moat will bring
him to you the moment he arrives.

PRINZIVALLE

He had been here ere this were my
offer rejected. . . . This hour decides;
and it holds all my life, like the great
ships with flowing sails of which prisoners
dream, as they stare into the darkness
around them. . . . It is strange that a
man should thus confide all his destiny,
his brain, his soul, his joy, and his sorrow,
to a thing so frail as the love of a
woman! . . . I could smile at it myself,
were it not stronger than my smile.
. . . Marco does not return. . . . She
will come, therefore. . . . Go, look for
the beacon which declares her consent.
. . . See whether the light be there that
heralds the trembling footsteps of the
woman who gives herself that the others

—I will go myself. I have waited since my boyhood for this hour, waited and yearned; and no eyes but mine, not even those of a friend, must be the first to greet its coming. . . . [*He goes to the entrance of the tent, flings back the curtain, and looks into the night.*] See, the light, Vedio, the light! See how it shines and flares into the blackness! . . . From the Campanile—that is well, that is as it should be. . . . See how it pierces the gloom! . . . It is the only light that shines on the town. . . . Ah, never yet has Pisa lifted to the skies so glorious a flower, waited for so long and with so little hope! . . . Ah, my brave Pisans! You will hold festival to-night that shall linger long in your annals; while I shall know a diviner joy than had I saved my native city. . . .

VEDIO

[*Touching his arm.*] Let us return to the tent. Messer Trivulzio comes from yonder.

PRINZIVALLE

[*Coming back and dropping the curtain.*] That is so. We must still . . . The interview will be brief. . . . [*He goes to the table and fingers the papers there.*] Have you his three letters?

VEDIO

There are only two.

PRINZIVALLE

The two that I intercepted, and this evening's order. . . .

VEDIO

Here are the first two. You are crumpling the other in your hand. . . .

He is coming. . . .

[The guard raises the curtain. Enter

TRIVULZIO.

TRIVULZIO

Have you observed the strange light
that appears to be flashing signals from
the Campanile? . . .

PRINZIVALLE

You think they are signals?

TRIVULZIO

I have no doubt of it. . . . I must
speak with you, Prinzivalle.

PRINZIVALLE

Say on. Leave us, Vedio, but do not
go far away; I shall want you.

[VEDIO goes.

TRIVULZIO

You are aware, Prinzivalle, of the high esteem in which I hold you. This, indeed, I have already proved to you more than once, but there is much besides of which you are ignorant; for the policy of Florence, which people term perfidious, though it be merely prudent, demands that many things should be concealed even from those whom she admits to her most intimate secrets. We all obey her profound orders; and each one of us must courageously support the weight of her mysteries, which are the emanation of her supreme intelligence. Let it suffice, then, that I tell you that I had a very good share in your election, notwithstanding your youth and unknown origin, to the command of the most magnificent army the Republic has ever put into the field; nor, indeed, has there ever been

some time now a party has been forming against you. I am not sure whether, in revealing this to you, I am not allowing the sincere friendship in which I hold you to infringe somewhat upon my duty. There are often occasions, however, when a too narrow clinging to duty may work more mischief than the very rashest generosity. Know, therefore, that you have enemies who accuse you most bitterly of indecision, vacillation, sloth. Others even go so far as to throw doubt upon your loyalty. Carefully framed slanders have been set on foot, which lend colour to these insinuations. They have produced a disastrous effect upon that section of the Assembly that already eyed you with disfavour. These have gone so far as to discuss your arrest, and your trial. Fortunately, I was advised in time. I hastened to

Florence, and had no difficulty in opposing proof to proof. I stood surety for you. It remains for you now to justify my confidence, which has never for an instant wavered; for we are lost if you do not act. My colleague, Messer Maladura, is held in check at Bibbiena by the troops of the Venetian Proveditor. Another army is marching upon Florence from the North. The city is in danger. All may yet be well if on the morrow you deliver the assault for which we have waited so long. This will set free our finest army, as well as the only captain whom victory has never forsaken; and we shall be able to return proudly to Florence, amidst the pomp and triumph that shall turn your enemies of yesterday into your most fervent admirers and partisans. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Is that all you have to say to me?

Very nearly; though I have passed over in silence the very real affection in which I hold you, which has indeed grown with every day of our intercourse. And this, notwithstanding the difficult position in which we are often placed by laws that seem contradictory; laws which demand that the authority of the general should at times—at moments of danger—be balanced by the mysterious power of Florence, whereof I am this day the humble representative. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

This order that I have just received was written by you?

TRIVULZIO

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

By your own hand?

TRIVULZIO

Undoubtedly. Why this question?

PRINZIVALLE

These two letters—you recognise them?

TRIVULZIO

Perhaps. I know not; what do they contain? . . . I must first . . .

PRINZIVALLE

! There is no need. I know.

TRIVULZIO

Are they the two letters you intercepted, as I hoped you might? . . . I see that the test was good.

PRINZIVALLE

You are not dealing with a child. Let us not fall back on such wretched tricks

as these; or prolong an interview that I am eager to end, that, indeed, delays a reward which no triumph in Florence could ever equal! . . . In these letters you have most basely and falsely denounced every action of mine. Was this from pure malice, or to provide the treacherous avarice of Florence with the indispensable excuse for dealing cheaply with a victorious mercenary? . . . In these letters all things are distorted with so fiendish a skill, that there are moments when I doubt my own innocence. My every action has been disfigured, degraded, besmirched; and this from the very first week of the siege, down to the hour when my eyes were opened—the fortunate hour when I resolved to justify your suspicions. I have had your letters carefully copied—I have sent them to Florence. I intercepted the answers. Your word is accepted,

Monna Vanna

you are believed: the more readily inasmuch as you had been supplied with the theme of your accusation. I am judged, unheard; I am condemned to death. . . . And I know full well that not all the innocence of the archangels could help me to escape from the damning proofs that you have provided. . . .

And therefore do I now spring forward, burst your puny chains, and take the initiative. Hitherto, I have been no traitor; but since these two letters fell into my hands I have been preparing your ruin. This night I shall sell you, you and your sorry masters; I shall deal you the cruellest, the most fatal blow that lies in my power. And I shall regard it as the noblest deed of all my life, thus to have humbled the one city that exalts treachery to a virtue, and seeks to govern the universe by means of fraud and hypocrisy, lies,

Monna Vanna

ingratitude, and villainy. . . . For this evening, thanks to me, Pisa, your ancient enemy, who prevents you, and shall prevent you whilst her walls stand, from spreading corruption over all the world; this evening Pisa shall be saved, and shall lift her head to breathe defiance once more. . . . Ah, do not rise, or make vain gestures. . . . My measures have all been taken, and they are inevitable; you are in my power; and even as I hold you now do I seem to hold in my hand the destiny of Florence. . . .

[TRIVULZIO *draws his dagger and aims a swift blow at PRINZIVALLE.*

TRIVULZIO

Not yet. . . . Not while my hands are free . . .

[PRINZIVALLE, *warding off the blow with his arm, has thrown*

*him in the face. He seizes
TRIVULZIO by the wrist.*

PRINZIVALLE

I was not prepared for this spasm of
terror. . . . See, I hold you now, and
could crush you with one hand. . . . I
have only to lower this dagger. . . . It
would seem already to be seeking your
throat. What! you say nothing; are
you not afraid then?

TRIVULZIO

[*Coldly.*] No; use the dagger, it is
your right. I knew my life was forfeit.

PRINZIVALLE .

[*Loosening his hold.*] Ah. . . . But,
truly, then, this thing is strange that
you have done. . . . And even very

ingratitude, and villainy. . . . For this evening, thanks to me, Pisa, your ancient enemy, who prevents you, and shall prevent you whilst her walls stand, from spreading corruption over all the world; this evening Pisa shall be saved, and shall lift her head to breathe defiance once more. . . . Ah, do not rise, or make vain gestures. . . . My measures have all been taken, and they are inevitable; you are in my power; and even as I hold you now do I seem to hold in my hand the destiny of Florence. . . .

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*up the weapon, which strikes
him in the face. He seizes
TRIVULZIO by the wrist.*

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TRIVULZIO

[*Coldly.*] No; use the dagger, it is your right. I knew my life was forfeit.

PRINZIVALLE .

[*Loosening his hold.*] Ah. . . . But, truly, then, this thing is strange that you have done. . . . And even very

Monna Vanna

rare. . . . There are not many soldiers who would so readily clutch the hand of death ; and I should not have thought that within so feeble a body . . .

TRIVULZIO

You men of the sword err, perhaps, when you think that courage cannot exist away from the point of a blade.

PRINZIVALLE

You may be right. . . . It is well. . . . You are not free, but no harm shall be done you. . . . We serve different gods, you and I. [*He wipes the blood from his face.*] Ah, the blow was not unskillful. . . . A little too hasty, but not lacking in vigour. . . . It went within an ace of . . . And now, tell me, what would you do, if you held a man in your hands who had been so

Monna Vanna

nigh despatching you to a world whither
no one is anxious to go?

TRIVULZIO

I should not spare him.

PRINZIVALLE

I do not understand you. . . . You
are strange. . . . Confess that it was a
despicable thing to write those letters.
I have shed my blood for Florence in
three great battles; I have never spared
myself, I have strained every nerve, the
gain was all yours. I was a faithful
servant to the Republic, nor did one
single thought of disloyalty ever enter
my heart. . . . You must have known
this, you who were always spying upon
me. . . . And yet, in your letters, some
vile malice or hatred caused you to dis-
tort every action of mine, every step that

Monna Vanna

I took. I thought only of Florence;
you heaped slander on slander, and lie
on lie. . . .

TRIVULZIO

The facts were fallacious—that mattered but little. It was for me to guard against the dangerous hour when the soldier, flushed by two or three victories, is on the point of no longer obeying the master he serves, whose mission is loftier than his. That hour had sounded, as this hour proves. The people of Florence held you too fondly. It is for us to shatter their idols. They show some resentment at the time, but they have created us that we may oppose their dangerous caprices; and it seemed to me that the hour had come to mark out their idol for destruction. I warned Florence. She knew what my falsehoods meant. . . .

Anna Anna

PRINZIVALLE

The hour had not come, and would never have come, but for your shameful letters. . . .

TRIVULZIO

It might have come, and that was sufficient. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

What! Is an innocent man to be sacrificed to a mere possibility? Offered up in cold blood to a danger that never might threaten?

TRIVULZIO

What is the life of one man to the safety of Florence!

PRINZIVALLE

You believe, then, in the destiny of Florence, in her work, her existence?

Monna Vanna

She must be something, then, that I do
not understand? . . .

TRIVULZIO

Yes, I believe only in her; the rest
is nothing to me. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

After all it may be so. . . . And you
are right, since you believe. . . . I have
no country, I cannot tell. There are
times when I regret that I have no
country. . . . But I have something
that you never shall have; that no man
ever has had as much as I. . . . That
atones for all. . . . Go; let us part, we
have no time to weigh these enigmas.
. . . . We are far removed from each
other, and yet there are points where
we almost touch. . . . Each man has
his destiny. . . . Some follow an idea,

Monna Vanna

and others a desire; and it would be as hard for you to change your idea as for me to change my desire. . . . Fare you well, Trivulzio; we go different ways. . . . Give me your hand.

TRIVULZIO

Not yet. I shall give you my hand on the day of punishment. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Be it so; to-day you have lost, you will win to-morrow. . . . [*He calls*
"VEDIO!"] [*VEDIO comes in.*

VEDIO

Master! . . . What—you are wounded, the blood is flowing. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

No matter. . . . Summon the two

Monna Vanna

guards. Let them take this man away;
but see that they do him no injury.
. . . He is an enemy whom I love.
. . . Let them bestow him in some
safe place, where no one shall see
him. . . . They answer for his safety,
and shall set him free at my com-
mand. . . .

[VEDIO goes, leading TRIVULZIO.

PRINZIVALLE stands before
a mirror and examines his
wound.

PRINZIVALLE

The wound is not deep, but it has
bitten into my face. . . . Who could
have thought that so feeble and haggard
a man . . . [VEDIO returns.] You have
done as I bid you?

VEDIO

Yes. Master, this will mean ruin. . . .

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

Ruin! . . . Ah, that I could be ruined like this each day to the day of my death! . . . Ruin, Vedio! . . . Why, never yet in this world will a legitimate revenge have brought to a man a happiness like mine—a happiness of which he has dreamed ever since he first learnt to dream. . . . I have waited and prayed for it! I would have allowed no crime to stop me, for it was mine, it belonged to me, and I was bound to have it; and now that my star, impelled by justice, by pity, sends it to me, upon its silvery rays, you speak of ruin! . . . Oh, poor men with cold hearts! . . . Poor men without love! . . . Do you not know, then, that at this moment my destiny is being weighed in the sky, and that they are awarding me the share of a hundred lovers, the share of a

Monna v'anna

thousand joys! . . . Ah, I know it!
. . . I touch the moment when those
marked out for grand disaster or triumph
suddenly find themselves on the topmost
peak of their life, where all things belong
to them and obey them, and become
moulded to their hand! . . . And what
matters the rest, and all that comes after!
. . . There is an ecstasy too great for
man, and it crushes him who achieves
it! . . .

VEDIO

[Approaching him with a linen bandage.]
The blood still flows; let me tie up your
face.

PRINZIVALLE

Yes. Since it must be. . . . But see
that your bandages do not cover my
eyes. *[Looking into the mirror.]* Ah, I
seem more like a patient shrinking from

WIONNA vanna

a surgeon's knife than a lover who soon
will be joyfully welcoming his love! . . .
[*He shifts the bandage.*] And you, Vedio,
my poor Vedio, what will become of
you?

VEDIO

Master, where you go I go too. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

No, you must leave me. . . . I know
not whither I shall gō, or what will
become of me. . . . Do you make
good your escape; none will follow you,
whereas if you go with your master
. . . In these coffers is gōld; take it,
it is yours, I need it no longer. . . .
Are the waggons ready, the flocks all
gathered?

VEDIO

They are in front of the tent.

Moñna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

Good. When I give the signal you will do what has to be done. [*The sound of a gun-shot is heard from afar.*] What is that?

VEDIO

A shot has been fired at the outposts.

PRINZIVALLE

Who gave the order? . . . It must be a mistake. . . . If they should have fired at her! Did you not tell . . .

VEDIO .

Yes. It is impossible. I placed a number of guards there, who will bring her to you the moment that she arrives.

PRINZIVALLE

Go and see. [*Exit VEDIO.*

[*For a moment* PRINZIVALLE

Monna Vanna

remains alone. VEDIO returns, raises the curtain at the entrance, and murmurs "Master." Then he withdraws, and MONNA VANNA, wrapt in a long mantle, appears, and pauses on the threshold. PRINZIVALLE trembles, and moves toward her.

VANNA

[In a stifled voice.] I have come as you bade me. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

There is blood on your hand: are you wounded? . . .

VANNA

A ball touched my shoulder. . . .

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

What? When? This is terrible—

VANNA

As I drew near the camp.

PRINZIVALLE

Who fired the shot? . .

VANNA

I know not, the man fled.

PRINZIVALLE

Are you in pain? . . .

VANNA

No.

PRINZIVALLE

Shall I have the wound dressed?

VANNA

No. It is nothing. [*A moment's silence.*]

PRINZIVALLE

Your mind is made up? . . .

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

Shall I remind you of the conditions?

VANNA

There is no need.

PRINZIVALLE

You have no regrets? . . .

VANNA

Was it stipulated that I should come
without regrets?

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

What? When? This is terrible—

VANNA

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PRINZIVALLE

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Monna Vanna

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No. It is nothing. [*A moment's silence.*]

PRINZIVALLE

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VANNA

Was it stipulated that I should come
without regrets?

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

Your husband consents? . . .

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

There still is time if you wish to
renounce. . . .

VANNA

No.

PRINZIVALLE

But why are you doing this?

VANNA

Because out yonder they perish of
hunger, and to-morrow a still swifter
death would await them. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

There is no other reason?

Monna Vanna

VANNA

What other could there be? . .

PRINZIVALLE

I can conceive that a virtuous woman .

VANNA

Yes. ,

PRINZIVALLE

One who loves her husband . . .

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

Deeply?

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

You are clad only in your mantle?

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

You have seen the chariots and flocks
in front of the tent?

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

There are two hundred waggons filled
with the best Tuscan wheat; two hundred
others laden with forage, and with fruit
and wine from Sienna. There are thirty
more filled with German powder, and
fifteen smaller ones laden with lead;
and around them are six hundred oxen
from Apulia, and twelve hundred sheep.
They await your order to march into
Pisa. Would you care to see them
start?

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

Come then to the door of my tent.

[He raises the tapestry, gives the order, and makes a signal. A sound is heard as of a vague and mighty movement. Torches are kindled, and waved to and fro. Whips are cracked and waggons creak. There is the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen. VANNA and PRINZIVALLE, erect on the threshold of the tent, watch for a moment the enormous convoy as it starts forth, with torches flaming in the starry night.]

PRINZIVALLE

From this night, thanks to you, Pisa

Monna Vanna

will cease to be hungry. She is invincible now, and to-morrow will know the glory of a joy and triumph for which none had dared any longer to hope. . . . Are you satisfied?

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

Let us close the tent then; and give me your hand. The evening is still mild, but the night will be cold. You have no weapons concealed about you, no poison?

VANNA

I have only my sandals and this mantle. Search me if you are afraid. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

It is not for myself that I fear, but for you. . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

I place the life of my people high
above all. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

It is well, and you have done right.
. . . Come, sit here. . . . It is a warrior's
couch, rugged and fierce, narrow as a
tomb, and but little-worthy of you.
Sit here, on these tiger-skins, that have
never yet felt the gentle touch of a
woman. . . . Place this soft fur at
your feet. . . . It is the skin of a lynx
that an African monarch gave me on
the night of a victory. . . .

[VANNA sits, closely wrapped in her
mantle.

PRINZIVALLE

The light of the lamp is falling on
your eyes; shall I move it?

Monna Vanna

VANNA

It matters not. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

*[Kneeling at the foot of the couch and
seizing VANNA's hand.]* Giovanna! . . .

*[VANNA starts up in surprise and looks at
him.]* Oh, Vanna, my Vanna . . .—

for I, too, used to call you thus. . . .
Now I tremble as I speak your name.

. . . It has so long remained trebly
sealed in my heart that it cannot escape
without breaking its prison. . . . Indeed,
it is my heart, it is all I have. . . . In
each one of its syllables lies all my life,
and as I pronounce them I feel my life
flow from me. . . . It was familiar to
me, I thought I knew it; I had said
it again and again to myself, until I
ceased to be afraid: I had spoken it
every hour of every day, like a great

Monna Vanna

word of love that one yearns to utter, if it be only once, in the presence of her whom it has so long evoked in vain. . . . I thought that my lips had shaped themselves to its form; that at the long-sought-for moment they would pronounce it so softly, so meekly, so humbly, with so profound and mighty a yearning, that she who should hear it would know the love and the anguish it held. . . . Whereas, to-day it is merely a shadow. . . . It is no longer the same. . . . My fears and sorrows have bruised it and crushed it, and I can scarcely recognise it as it leaves my lips. All the meaning and adoration that I have placed within it come now to break my strength and extinguish my voice. . . .

VANNA

Who are you? *

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

You do not know me? . . . I recall no memory? . . . Ah, the marvels that time effaces! . . . But it is true that I alone had seen those marvels. . . . And it is better, perhaps, that they should be forgotten. . . . I shall hope no longer, I shall have fewer regrets! . . . No, I am nothing to you. . . . A poor wretch, who for one single instant wistfully gazes at what has been the aim of his life; an unhappy man who asks nothing, who knows not even what it is he should ask; and yet who would, were it possible to him, tell you before you go of what you have been to him, and will be to the very end of his life. . . .

VANNA

You know me then! . . . Who are you? . . .

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

You do not remember the man who is looking at you now, as, in a fairy world, one would look at the very source of one's joy and existence? . . .

VANNA

No. . . . At least I do not believe . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Yes, you have forgotten. . . . And I was sure, alas, that you had forgotten! . . . You were eight years old and I twelve when I met you for the first time. . . .

VANNA

Where? . . .

PRINZIVALLE

At Venice, one Sunday in June. . . .
My father, the old goldsmith, brought

• Monna Vanna

your mother a necklace of pearls. She was admiring the necklace—I strayed into the garden. . . . I found you there, by the side of a pond, in a grove of myrtle. A thin golden ring had fallen into the water. . . . You were crying on the bank. . . . I sprang into the pond. . . . The ring was glittering on the marble basin; I seized it and placed it on your finger. . . . I was nearly drowned. . . . But you kissed me and were happy. . . .

• VANNA

It was a fair-haired child named Gianello. Are you Gianello?

• PRINZIVALLE

Yes.

VANNA

Who could have recognised you? . . . And, besides, your face is covered with

Monna Vanna

bandages. . . . I can only see your eyes. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

[*Shifting the bandages.*] Do you know me now that I move them?

VANNA

Yes, perhaps. . . . I seem to. . . . For your smile is still that of a child. . . . But you are wounded, the blood is flowing. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Ah, it is not my first wound. . . . But that any one should have hurt you. . . .

VANNA

Let me adjust your bandage, it is badly tied. [*She winds the linen round his cheek.*] I have often tended the wounded in this war. . . . Yes, yes, I remember. . . . I

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Monna Vanna

can see the garden again, with its pomegranates, its roses and laurels. We played there more than once, in the afternoon, when the sun shone hot on the sand. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Twelve times in all—I kept count. . . . I can tell you each game that we played, and every word that you said. . . .

VANNA

Then, one day, I remember, I waited—for I loved you well, you were so solemn, so quiet, and treated me like a little queen. . . . But you never came back. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

My father took me to Africa. . . . There we got lost in the desert. . . . Then I was taken prisoner by the Arabs, the Turks, the Spaniards—that was my

Monna Vanna

life. When I saw Venice again your mother was dead ; the garden lay waste. . . . I sought you in vain. . . . Till, at last, I heard of you, thanks to your beauty, which no man could ever forget who once had beheld it. . . .

VANNA

You knew me at once when I came in ?

PRINZIVALLE

Had ten thousand women come into my tent, every one with a face like yours and clad alike and equally beautiful, ten thousand sisters whom their own kindred could not distinguish, I should have risen and taken you by the hand and said, "This is she." . . . It is strange, is it not, that an image one loves should thus be able to dwell in the heart ; for in this heart of mine yours lived so profoundly that it grew

Monna Vanna

and it changed. . . . It was different to-day from what it was yesterday, it bloomed, it became more beautiful; and the years adorned it with the gifts that they bring to the growing child. . . . And yet, when I saw you again it seemed at first as though my eyes deceived me. . . . My memory, that had so faithfully treasured your beauty, had yet been too timid, too halting; it had not dared to invest you with all the glory which so suddenly flashed on my sight. I was like the man who remembers a flower he has only seen once as he crosses the garden in twilight, and suddenly beholds a hundred thousand beneath the radiant light of the sun. . . . You came in, and I saw the brow again that I knew so well, the hair, and the eyes; I saw the soul in the face I adored. . . . But its beauty dwarfed the one that I had been silently storing for days and

Monna Vanna

days, and months without end, and year after year—the beauty that had fed on a halting memory, and fallen so immeasurably short of the real. . . .

VANNA

Yes, you loved me as one loves at that age; but time and absence throw a glamour over love. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Men often say they have only loved once in their life, but it rarely is true. . . . To disguise their indifference, or their desire, they lay claim to the wonderful sorrow of those who were born for a single love; and when one of these tries to tell of the deep and the dolorous truth that has furrowed his life, the words that the fortunate lovers have used so freely have lost all their strength, all their gravity: and she who listens will

Monna Vanna

unconsciously degrade the poor sacred words, often so full of sadness, to the trivial, playful meaning they have for the majority of men. . . .

VANNA

I shall not do that. I can understand the love for which we all yearn when our life begins; the love we renounce because years—although mine are few—put an end to many things. . . . But, tell me, when you passed through Venice again and had found trace of me—tell me what happened then? You made no effort to see the woman whom you had loved so deeply? . . .

PRINZIVALLE

At Venice I learned that your mother was dead, that her fortune was lost, and that you were about to marry a great Tuscan noble, the richest and most

Monna Vanna

powerful of all in Pisa, to whom you should be as a queen, adored and happy. . . . I was an adventurer without a home, without a country—what was there I could offer? . . . Destiny seemed to demand the sacrifice I grudgingly made to my love. Ah, how often have I wandered around the walls of this city, and clung to the chains of the gate, in my fear lest my longing to see you should become too overpowering, should induce me to disturb the love and happiness that you had found! . . . I hired out my sword, I engaged in two or three wars; I was a mercenary, and my name became known. . . . I waited for the days to come, though hope had left me; till at last Florence despatched me to Pisa. . . .

VANNA

How feeble and cowardly men become

Monna Vanna

would have . . . Ah, one cannot say what one would have done. . . . But this much I know, fate should not have wrenched my happiness from me without a struggle. . . . I should have cried to fate, "Hence, hence, I pass here!" . . . I should have forced the very stones to side with me! And whatever the cost, the man whom I loved should have learnt of my love, and himself have pronounced the sentence, and pronounced it more than once! . . .

PRINZIVALLE

[*Seeking her hand.*] You do not love him, Vanna?

VANNA

Whom?

PRINZIVALLE

Guido.

VANNA

[*Withdrawing her hand.*] Do not take

Monna Vanna

my hand. I cannot give it to you. I see I must make myself clear. When Guido married me I was alone, almost poor; and the woman who is alone and poor, soon falls victim to calumny, especially if her face be fair, and she scornful of artifice or falsehood. . . . To these calumnies Guido paid no heed; he had faith in me, and his faith pleased me. He made me happy; at least as happy as one can be when one has renounced the vague and extravagant dreams which seem beyond human life; and I almost hope to convince you too, that one can be happy without spending his days in search of a happiness that no man ever has known. I love Guido to-day with a love less strange than the one you imagine you feel; but mine, at least, is steadier, calmer, more faithful, and more sure. . . . That is the love that fortune has given me; I accepted it with my eyes

Monna Vanna

open; I shall have no other; and if any one breaks it that one will not be I. . . . So you see you have misunderstood me. . . . When I tried to point out to you what I thought was an error of yours, it was not of you that I spoke, it was not of us: I spoke in the name of a love of which a glimpse descends on the heart at the very first dawn: a love which exists, perhaps, but that is not mine or yours; for you have not done what such a love would do. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

You judge me harshly, Vanna, or rather this love of mine. You judge it with all too little knowledge of what it has done, and had to suffer, in order to bring about this one happy moment that would most surely plunge every other love into despair. . . . But though it had done

Monna Vanna

nothing, and attempted nothing, I know of its existence, I who am its victim, whose life it has seized: I who bear it within me, and have lost all that makes for the joy and glory of man! . . . Ah, believe me, Vanna, and you must believe me, for I am of those who ask for nothing and hope for nothing! . . . You are in my tent now, and at my mercy. . . . I have only to say a word, to stretch out my hand, and all is mine that the ordinary lover demands. . . . But you know as well as I that the love of which I have spoken craves other things; therefore I ask that you no longer doubt me. . . . I took your hand because I thought you would believe me. . . . I shall not touch it again, my lips shall not press it; but, at least, Vanna, when we shall part to meet no more, at least know what kind of love mine has been, that it halted only before the impossible!

Monna Vanna

VANNA

That it could regard anything as impossible—it is that makes me doubt. . . . I demand no superhuman ordeals, no terrible obstacles to be overcome. I ask for no proofs of this kind, I am only too willing to believe. . . . Indeed, it is for the sake of your happiness, and mine, that I still would try to doubt. . . . In a love as mighty as yours there is something sacred, that could not but disturb the coldest of women. . . . And therefore do I probe into what you have done, and should be almost happy could I discover nothing that bears the impress of this mortal passion, on which fate so seldom smiles. . . . And I should have been convinced that I had found nothing, but for this last act of yours; for when I remember that you have madly wrecked your future, your fame, all that you have

Monna Vanna

in the world, to bring me here for an hour beneath this tent, then am I forced to admit that possibly your love may be what you say. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

This last act is the only one that proves nothing. . . .

VANNA

How? . . .

PRINZIVALLE

I prefer you should know the truth. In causing you to come to me here, in saving Pisa in your name, I have sacrificed nothing.

VANNA

I do not understand. . . . Have you not betrayed your country, effaced your past services, ruined your future? What stands before you? Is it not exile or death?

Monna Vanna #

PRINZIVALLE

In the first place I have no country. Otherwise, had my love been never so great, I should not have betrayed it for that love. . . . But I am only a mercenary, faithful when others are faithful, a traitor when they betray. . . . I have been falsely accused by the Florentine Commissioners, and condemned without trial by a Republic of merchants, whose ways you know as well as I. I was aware that I was lost; and the thing I have done to-night, far from hastening my ruin, will perhaps save me, if that still be possible. . . .

VANNA

So what you have sacrificed for my sake counts but little?

PRINZIVALLE

It counts for nothing at all. . . . I

Monna Vanna

could not but tell you. I should have no joy in a smile of yours that I had purchased with a lie. . . .

VANNA

Ah, Gianello, Gianello, this is worth more than love and its noblest proofs! . . . You need no longer seek the hand that fled from you before. Take it. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

I had rather that love had won it! . . . But what matter, after all! . . . It belongs to me, Vanna: I hold it between mine, I drink its fragrance, I live its life, it is one with me—I lose myself for a moment in the sweet illusion. . . . Ah, the dear hand! I open it, close it, as though it could answer me in the secret, mysterious language of lovers; I press my kisses upon it, and you still let it lie here. . . . You forgive me,

Monna Vanna

then, for the cruel ordeal to which I
exposed you? . . .

VANNA

I should have done the same thing;
better perhaps or worse, had I been in
your place. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Did you know who I was when you
agreed to come to my tent? . . .

VANNA

No one knew. There were strange
rumours. . . . According to some,
Prinzivalle was a horrible old man;
others declared him to be a young prince
of marvellous beauty. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

But Guido's father saw me; did he
say nothing? . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

No.

PRINZIVALLE

You did not question him? . . .

VANNA

No.

PRINZIVALLE

But did your heart not fail when you
came helpless, in the night, to the tent
of an unknown savage? . . .

VANNA

The sacrifice had to be made. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

And when you saw me?

VANNA

At first the bandages hid your face. . . .

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

Yes, but afterwards, Vanna, when I raised them?

VANNA

Then it was different, and I already knew you. . . . But you, when you saw me enter the tent — what was in your mind then; what had you intended to do? . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Ah, how can I tell! . . . I knew I was lost, I had the wild craving to drag all things down with me. . . . And I hated you because of this love of mine! I marvel now at myself when I think of it. . . . There needed but a word that was not yours, a gesture different from your gestures, to unchain the brute within me and fan my hatred. . . . But

Monna Vanna

the moment I saw you I realised how impossible it was. . . .

VANNA

So did I realise it too, and all fear left me, for we understood each other without a word being said. And it is all very strange. . . . I should have done this thing, too, I believe, had I loved like you. . . . Indeed, there are moments, as I listen to you, when I fancy that I am speaking, and that your words are my words, and you hearing what I am saying. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

I, too, Vanna, I felt at once that the wall which divides us from all other beings was growing transparent; it was as though I had plunged my hands into a flowing stream, and withdrawn them sparkling with light, shining with

Monna Vanna

confidence and sincerity. . . . And it seemed to me that men were changed, that all I had hitherto thought had been wrong. . . . Most of all did I feel that I myself was changed, emerging at last as from a long imprisonment; that the gates were opening, flowers and leaves entwining around the bars; that the snows were melting on the far horizon, and the pure air of the morning entering my soul and breathing upon my love! . . .

VANNA

In me, too, there was a change. I was surprised to find myself speaking to you as I did from the very beginning. . . . I am habitually silent. . . . I have never spoken thus to any man, save it be to Marco, Guido's father, and even with him it is different. . . . He is wrapt in a thousand dreams; our conversations are rare . . . and, as for the others, there

Monna Vanna

is always a look in their eyes that chills me. How dare I tell them I love them, or that I yearn to know what is passing in their heart? . . . Your eyes do not repel, they do not alarm. . . . I felt at once that I knew you, though I could not recall where it was I had seen you before. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Could you have loved me, Vanna, had my evil star not brought me to you when it was too late? . . .

VANNA

Were I to tell you that I could have loved you, it would be the same as my telling you that I love you now, Gianello, and you know as well as I that cannot be. . . . But we speak to each other here as though we were on a desert island. . . . Were I alone in the world

Monna Vanna

there would be no more to say. . . .
But we forget the suffering that another
endures, while we two smile at the past.
. . . When I think of Guido's sorrow
as I left Pisa, the despair in his eyes,
his haggard face — oh, I can wait no
longer! . . . Dawn must be close at
hand, and I am so eager to know! . . .
I hear a footstep, some one is passing
the tent. . . . People are whispering
behind the curtain. . . . Listen, listen!
. . . What is it?

*[The sound of whispers and hurried
footsteps is heard outside the
tent. Then the voice of VEDIO
from without.]*

VEDIO

[*Off.*] Master!

PRINZIVALLE

It is Vedio. Come in! Well?

Monna Vanna

VEDIO

[*At the entrance of the tent.*] Quick, quick! Master, you must fly! Lose not an instant! Messer Maladura, the second Commissioner of Florence . . .

PRINZIVALLE

He was at Bibbiena. . . .

VEDIO

He has returned. . . . Six hundred Florentines are with him. . . . I saw them pass. The camp is in uproar. . . . He brings orders. . . . He proclaims you traitor. . . . He now seeks Trivulzio, and if he should find him while you are still here . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Come, Vanna. . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Whither shall I go?

PRINZIVALLE

Vedio, with two men on whom I can
rely, shall escort you to Pisa. . . .

VANNA

And you, what will you do?

PRINZIVALLE

I know not, and it matters little.
The world is wide enough—I shall find
shelter.

VEDIO

Oh, master, beware! They hold the
country all round the town, and Tuscany
is full of spies. . . .

VANNA

Come to Pisa.

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

With you? . . .

VANNA

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE

I cannot. . . .

VANNA

If only for a few days . . . to put
them off the scent. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

What will your husband do? . . .

VANNA

He will not fail in his duty to a
guest. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Will he believe you when you tell
him? . . .

Monna Vanna .

VANNA

Yes. . . .—If he did not believe
me . . . But he will, he must. . . .—
Come. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

No.

VANNA

Why?—What do you fear?

PRINZIVALLE

It is for you that I fear. . . .

VANNA

For me? For me the danger is the
same whether I be alone or with you.
It is for you we must fear, for you
who have saved Pisa; now it is right
that Pisa should save you. . . . You
come under my protection, and I stand
surety for you. . . .

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

So be it: I will go with you. . . .

VANNA

You could give me no better proof of
your love. . . . Come. Let us lose no
time. . . . Throw open the tent. . . .

[PRINZIVALLE, *followed by VANNA,*
moves to the entrance and throws
the tapestry wide open. There
is a vast murmur of voices and
clashing of arms; but above all
is heard the sound of distant
bells, pealing joyfully, that burst
sharply upon the silence of the
night. Far away in the distance
Pisa is seen on the horizon,
brilliantly illuminated. Great
bonfires throw a mighty glare
on the dark sky.

Monna Vanna

PRINZIVALLE

Look, Vanna, look!

VANNA

What is it, Gianello? . . . Oh, I understand! . . . These are the fires of joy that they have kindled, to celebrate what you have done. . . . The walls are aglow, the ramparts glitter, the Campanile shines like a torch of gladness. See how the radiant towers are whispering to the stars! . . . And the very streets are reflected in the sky: I can recognise the road I trod this evening! . . . There is the piazza with its dome of fire; and the Campo Santo, that makes an island of shadows! . . . One could almost imagine that life, but now at its very last gasp, had rushed back to Pisa, leaping from spire to spire, flinging itself across the skies, flooding the walls, the whole country, and now making signals

Monna Vanna *

to us, and calling us back. . . . Listen,
listen! . . . Hark to the shouts, the
ecstasy, the delirium, rising and swelling,
as though the sea were invading Pisa!
. . . Hark to the bells, the bells that
sound as they did at my wedding. . . .
Ah, I am happy, happy, and happiest of
all to owe my happiness to you, to you
who have loved me best! . . . Come,
my Gianello! [*She kisses him on the
brow.*] That is the only kiss I can
give you. . . .

PRINZIVALLE

Oh, my Giovanna, it is the most
exquisite kiss that love could hope for!
. . . But see, you tremble; your knees
bend under you! . . . Come, lean on
me, put your arm round me. . . .

VANNA

It is nothing: I am faint—I have

Monna Vanna

over-taxed my strength. Help me, carry me! Let nothing hinder my first happy steps. . . . How beautiful is the night beneath the wakening dawn! . . . Quick! Let us hasten, it is time. We must arrive before the joy has faded. . . .

*[They go out together, PRINZIVALLE
supporting VANNA.]*

ACT III

State Apartment of GUIDO COLONNA .

- *Lofty windows, porticos, marble columns, &c.
To the left, at back, a terrace, the
approach to which is by a great double
staircase. On the balustrade of the
terrace are huge vases filled with flowers.
In the centre of the room, between the
columns, ample marble steps lead to the
terrace, which commands a view over a
great part of the town. Enter MARCO,
GUIDO, BORSO, and TORELLO.*

GUIDO

• I yielded to you, to her, to every one;
but now it is only just that I should have
my turn. I have been silent, I have held
my breath, I have hidden—as a coward

Monna Vanna

might hide while thieves were plundering his house. But, in my degradation, I have still retained my honour. . . . You have made a tradesman of me, a huckster, a weaver of cunning bargains. . . . But now the dawn has come. . . . I have not budged from my place. . . . A contract was made, I had to respect it. I had to purchase your food. . . . This night, this noble night, belonged to the buyer. . . . Ah, who knows, it was not too high a price, perhaps, to pay for this wheat, for all these sheep and oxen. . . . Now you have eaten your fill, and I have paid. . . . Now I am free, I am master once more; and I hurl my shame from me! . . .

MARCO

My son, I know not what your intentions may be, and no one has the right to intrude upon a grief like yours. . . .

Monna Vanna

Words cannot soften it, and I can well understand that the happiness which it has caused, which surrounds you on every side, can only embitter it, and render it more poignant. . . . The city is saved, but we almost regret the salvation which has cost you so dear; and we sink our heads before you who have had to bear the whole burden. . . . And yet, could we recall yesterday, I should still have to act as I did, mark out the same victims, and plead for the same injustice; for the man who would be just is compelled all his life sorrowfully to choose between two or three acts of varying injustice. . . . I know not what to say to you; but if this voice of mine that once you loved could for the last time reach your heart, I would beg of you, my son, not blindly to follow the first counsels of anger and grief. . . . Wait, at least, until the dangerous hour

Monna Vanna

be past which impels us to utter words that cannot be recalled. . . . Vanna will soon be here. Do not judge her to-day. Do nothing irrevocable. . . . For all that one does and says beneath the empire of an overpowering grief is so naturally, so cruelly, irrevocable! . . . Vanna will return, rejoicing, despairing. . . . Do not reproach her. . . . If you do not feel yourself strong enough to speak to her as you will speak after many days, let some time pass before you see her. . . . For in us poor creatures, who are merely the playthings of irresistible forces, there resides so much goodness, and justice, and wisdom, in the years that pass; and the only words that count, that we must eagerly grope for when misfortune blinds us, are those that we shall pronounce when full understanding has come, when we have forgiven and once more begun to love. . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

You have finished? It is well. This is no longer the hour for honeyed phrases, nor is there any one here to-day whom they still can deceive. . . . I have suffered you, and for the last time, to say what you had to say; for I was curious to know what your wisdom could offer, me in exchange for the life it has so effectually ruined. . . . See what it gives me! To wait, to be patient, to accept, forget, to pardon and weep! . . . Well, no! That does not suffice! . . . I had rather not be wise, and get rid of my shame! Words cannot do this for me. . . . And as for my intentions, they are very simple—I shall act as you would have urged me to act but a few years ago. A man has taken Vanna from me; Vanna is no longer mine while this man exists. For I, you see, am guided by other

Monna Vanna

rules than those that govern the verb and the adjective. I obey the great law before which every man bends whose heart is alive within him. . . . Pisa has food now, weapons; she can eat, she can fight; very well, I claim my share. From this day onwards her fighting men are mine, or, at least, the best of them—those I myself recruited and paid for, out of my purse. I have discharged my duty to Pisa—now I demand my own. These men shall not go back to her until they have done what I in my turn have now the right to exact. . . . As for the rest—for Vanna—I forgive her, or shall forgive her when this man has ceased to be. . . . She has been deceived, she has been led astray; but, at least, there was heroism in what she did. . . . The foulest advantage was taken of her mercy, her greatness of soul. . . . Be it so. . . . To forget may

Monna Vanna

me all your hatred and bitterness, all your cruel memories; and that none will remain for her who is to come. . . . Beyond this I have but one prayer. . . . Let me, and for the last time, see her throw herself into your arms. . . . Then I shall go without a murmur, without deeming you unjust. . . . It is good that in human sorrow the oldest should take on his shoulders all that he can bear; seeing that he has but a few steps before him ere his burden shall fall aside. . . .

[*Already during MARCO's last words, a vague and mighty murmur has been heard from without. In the silence that follows this noise increases, drawing nearer and becoming more and more distinct. First there is an expectant stir, then still distant shouts of a crowd rushing from point to*

Monna Vanna

point. Soon the vague cries take form, and one hears from all sides, more and more clearly, repeated a thousand times, "Vanna, Vanna, our Monna Vanna! Glory to Monna Vanna, Vanna, Vanna, Vanna!"

MARCO

[Rushing to the porticos that open on to the terrace.] It is Vanna! . . . She returns! . . . She is there! . . . They acclaim her; they acclaim her! Listen, listen!

[BORSO and TORELLO follow him to the terrace, while GUIDO remains alone, leaning against a pillar and looking straight before him. All this time the noise from without becomes louder and draws rapidly nearer.

Monna Vanna

MARCO

[*On the terrace.*] Ah, see! The square, the streets, the windows, the trees, are all black with waving heads and arms! The roofs, the tiles, the leaves, would seem to be changed into men! . . . But where is Vanna? . . . I see only a cloud that shuts and opens. . . . Borso, my poor eyes play me false and betray my love. . . . Old age and tears are blinding them. . . . They cannot see the one creature they yearn for. . . . Where is she, where is she? . . . Which way must I go to meet her? . . .

BORSO

[*Holding him back.*] No; do not go down, the people are wild, they have lost all control. They are mad with excitement, women are fainting, men trodden under foot! . . . Besides, it is

Monna Vanna

useless; she comes, there she is, there she is! . . . See, she raises her head! . . . She sees us. . . . She is hurrying to us! Ah, she looks up and smiles! . . .

MARCO

You see her, but I cannot! . . . These moribund eyes of mine can distinguish nothing! . . . For the first time I curse the old age that has taught me so much, and now hides this one thing from me! . . . But you who can see her, tell me how does she look? . . . Can you see her face?

BORSO

She returns in triumph. . . . She seems to shine on the people. . . .

TORELLO

But who is the man who is walking by her side?

Monna Vanna

BORSO

I know not. . . . I never have seen him, he hides his face. . . .

MARCO

Hark, how they shout! . . . The whole palace trembles; the flowers fall from the vases on to the steps. . . . The very flagstones seem to be rising beneath us to sweep us along in this overpowering gladness. . . . Ah, I begin to see. . . . They are close to the gates! The crowd divides. . . .

BORSO

Yes, before Vanna. They are making a lane for her, a lane of triumph, of love. . . . In her path they throw flowers, palm leaves, jewels. . . . Mothers hold out their children for her to touch; men stoop to kiss the stones her feet have

Monna Vanna

trodden. . . . Be careful, they are too near us. They are mad with joy. . . . If they reach these steps we shall all be swept away. . . . Ah, it is well! The guards are rushing from the other side to bar the entrance! . . . I will give orders to shut out the people and close the gates, if there be yet time. . . .

MARCO

No, no! Let joy blossom here as it blossoms in the people's hearts! It is their vast love that speaks—let it do what it will! They have suffered enough! . . . Now that salvation has come let no barrier hold them back! Ah, my poor brave people, I, too, am drunk with joy, I raise my voice with yours! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! Is it you whom I see on the step? . . . [*He rushes forward to meet VANNA, but BORSO and TORELLO hold him back.*]

Monna Vanna

Come, Vanna, come! They are keeping me back! They are alarmed at this mighty joy! Come, Vanna, come! More beautiful than Judith, and purer than Lucrece! . . . Come! . . . Here, in the midst of the flowers! [*He runs to the marble vases and seizes handfuls of flowers that he hurls to the foot of the stairs.*] I, too, have flowers with which to greet the light! I, too, have lilies, laurels, and roses with which to crown glory!

[*The clamour becomes more and more delirious. VANNA, accompanied by PRINZIVALLE, appears on the top of the steps, and throws herself into MARCO'S arms. The crowd invade the palace stairs and the terrace; but, nevertheless, remain at a certain distance from the group formed by VANNA, PRINZIVALLE, MARCO, BORSO, and TORELLO.*

Monna Vanna

VANNA

My father, I am happy. . . .

MARCO

[*Holding her close to him.*] And I, too,
my child, since I behold you again! . . .
Let me look at you through my tears.
. . . I see you more radiant than had
you descended from the depths of the
sky, that now acclaims your return! . . .
The horrible foe has not been able to rob
your eyes of their light, or a single smile
from your lips! . . .

VANNA

Father, I will tell you. . . . But where
is Guido? . . . He must be the first to
hear—to be comforted, for how can he
know?

MARCO

Vanna, Vanna, he is there. . . . Come.

Monna Vanna

. . . Me he repels, and justly, perhaps, but there is forgiveness for you, for your glorious fault; and I yearn to see you sink into his arms, that my last glance may fall upon your love. . . .

[GUIDO steps forward to VANNA.

She is about to speak—to throw herself into his arms—but GUIDO, with a brusque movement, stops and repels her, and addresses himself to those round about him.

GUIDO

[*In a strident and imperious voice.*] Go, all! . . .

VANNA

No, no! They must wait! . . . Guido, I must tell you; I must tell them all. . . . Guido, listen!

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

[Stopping her and pushing her back, raising his voice in growing anger.] Do not come near me, do not touch me! *[He advances towards the crowd which has invaded the hall, but now recoils before him.]* Have you not heard me? I bade you go! Leave us! You are the masters in your own homes, but here I rule! Borso, Torello, summon the guard! Ah! I see what it means! You have had your food, and now you would feast your eyes on this merry spectacle! . . . No, no, you have meat and wine; I have paid for you all; is that not enough? Go, I tell you! *[Silent movement in the crowd, which slowly disperses.]* Let none venture to linger! *[He seizes his father violently by the arm.]* You, too! You, above all! You more than the others, since the fault is yours! You shall

Monna Vanna

not see my tears! I desire to be alone.
Lonelier than the tomb, to know what
I have to know! [*Seeing PRINZIVALLE,
who has not stirred.*] And you? . . .
Who are you who stand there like a
veiled statue? . . . Are you death, or
shame? Have you not understood that
I told you to go? . . . [*He snatches a
halberd from a guard.*] Must I drive
you hence with this halberd? . . . You
touch your sword? . . . I, too, have a
sword, but have other uses for it. . . .
Henceforth it serves against one man,
and one man alone. . . . What veils are
those that hide your head? . . . I am in
no mood for a masquerade. . . . You
make no answer. . . . I ask who you are?
. . . Wait——

[*He approaches and is about to tear
away the bandages. VANNA
rushes between and stops
him.*

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Do not touch him ! . . .

GUIDO

[*In amazement.*] Vanna, what, Vanna?
Whence comes this sudden strength?

VANNA

It is he who saved me. . . .

GUIDO

Hah! He saved you. . . . When it
was too late. . . . A noble action, truly.
. . . . It would have been better . . .

VANNA

[*Feverishly.*] But let me tell you,
Guido, I implore you! One word, but
one word! . . . He saved me, he spared
me, respected me! . . . He comes here
with me, under my protection. . . . I

Monna Vanna

have given my word, your word, ours!
. . . You are angry now, but listen to
me; only listen! . . .

GUIDO

Who is this man?

VANNA

Prinzivalle. . . .

GUIDO

Who? . . . What? . . . He, that
man? That man Prinzivalle!

VANNA

Yes, yes! He is your guest! He
puts himself into your hands! It is he
who has saved me, Guido. . . .

GUIDO

[After a moment's stupor, with growing

Monna Vanna

exaltation and vehemence that render it impossible for VANNA to interrupt him.] Ah, this, my Vanna! . . . Ah, this falls on my soul like dew from the innermost heaven! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! . . . Yes, you are right; since it had to be done, that was the way to do it! Ah, I understand your stratagem now! Yes, I see it all! . . . But I did not know, I could not imagine! . . . There are women who would have killed him, as Judith killed Holophernes! . . . But his crime is greater than that of Holophernes, and calls for a greater vengeance! . . . Therefore you brought him here; therefore you have led him into the midst of his victims, who now shall become his executioners! . . . Ah, the magnificent triumph! . . . He followed you meekly, tenderly; and did not suspect that the kisses you gave him were kisses of hatred! . . . Here he is, caught in a trap! . . .

Monna Vanna

Yes, you were right! To have killed him down there, alone in his tent, after his horrible crime—that would not have sufficed! . . . A doubt would have remained, we should not have seen him. . . . All had known of the abominable compact; it was needful, therefore, that all should know the price to be paid for such treachery! But how did you do it? . . . It is the greatest triumph that ever a woman . . . Ah, you shall tell them! [*He rushes to the terrace and shouts at the top of his voice.*] Prinzi-valle! Prinzi-valle! The enemy is here! We hold him!

VANNA

[*Clinging to him and trying to keep him back.*] No, no! Listen! Listen, Guido, I implore you! Guido, Guido, you are wrong!

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

[Shaking himself free, and shouting still louder.] Let me go! You shall see! They must all of them know, all! *[Shouting to the crowd.]* Come back, all of you! You may, you must! . . . And you, too, my father! You who are crouching there behind the pillars, as though expecting a god to spring forth to repair the wrong you caused, and restore me my happiness! Come back! This is joy, joy! There has been a great miracle! I want the very stones to hear what has happened! I need skulk in corners no longer—that is all over—I shall go hence purer than the purest, richer than those who have lost nothing! Ah, now you can acclaim my Vanna! I acclaim her with you, and louder than you all!

*[The people hasten on to the terrace,
he drags them into the hall.]*

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

This time you shall have a spectacle!
There is a justice, after all! . . . Ah,
I knew it well, but could not believe that
it could act so promptly! . . . I thought
years and years must pass; that I should
have to spend my life seeking my foe,
in towns, in forests, in mountains! And,
see, suddenly he springs up before me
here, in this very room, on these steps,
in front of us! An overpowering miracle!
. . . But we shall hear. . . . It is Vanna
has done this! . . . And there shall be
justice! [*To MARCO, whom he seizes by
the arm.*] You see that man? . . .

MARCO

Yes; who is he?

GUIDO

You have seen him before. . . . You

Monna Vanna

have spoken to him. . . . You were his
complaisant messenger. . . .

[PRINZIVALLE *turns his face to*

MARCO, *who recognises him.*

MARCO

Prinzivalle! [Movement in the crowd.

GUIDO

Yes, yes, it is he; there is not the least
doubt. . . . Come nearer. Look at him,
touch him! He may have some new
message to send, perhaps. . . . Ah, he
is no longer the magnificent Prinzivalle!
But for him there shall be no pity. . . .
He took, by a vile and monstrous arti-
fice, the one thing in the world that I
could not give; and now he is come to
me! He has been brought hither by
justice, by a stratagem more marvellous

Monna Vanna

than justice, to ask of me the one recompense that I can accord. . . . Am I not right to call it a miracle? Come nearer, nearer! Have no fear, he cannot escape! And yet, see that the doors are shut; we must not allow another miracle to snatch him from us. . . . We shall not deal with him at once. . . . There shall be prolonged pleasures in store for him. . . . Ah, you, my brothers, to whom he caused so much suffering; you whom he sought to massacre, whose wives and children he sold into slavery, look at him now! Yes, this is he; and he is mine, he is yours, he is ours, I tell you! . . . He has made you suffer, but what has your suffering been compared with mine? . . . He shall be yours, very soon. . . . My Vanna has led him to us, that our vengeance may blot out our shame! . . .
[*Addressing the crowd.*] Stand witness, all

Monna Vanna

of you! There must not be one shadow of doubt. . . . Have you thoroughly realised what a miracle of heroism this is? . . . That man took Vanna from me. . . . I was helpless, I could do nothing: you sold her. . . . I have curses for none. . . . The past is past. . . . You had the right to prefer your life to my poor happiness. . . . But Vanna, my Vanna, has known how to build love anew with the thing that had killed it. . . . You destroyed; she has re-created. . . . Vanna has done it! . . . She is greater than Lucrece or Judith, Lucrece who killed herself, and Judith who slew Holophernes! Ah, that, truly, would have been too mild, too simple, too silent! . . . Vanna does not stay in a closed tent: she brings the victim to us, alive, and offers him to us all! . . . And how has she done this? . . . Listen, she will tell! . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Yes, I will tell you ; but it is all quite different. . . .

GUIDO

[*Stopping her and throwing his arms round her.*] Let me kiss you first, before them all. . . .

VANNA

[*Thrusting him violently back.*] No, no, never again if you will not hear me ! Listen, Guido ! I speak of an honour more real, of a happiness greater than those that are blinding you ! Ah ; I am glad they have all returned ! They will hear me, perhaps, before you will : they will understand before you understand ! Listen, Guido ! . . . You shall not touch me until you know. . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

[*Interrupting her, and again trying to embrace her.*] Yes, yes, I know—but first of all I will . . .

VANNA

Listen, I tell you! In all my life I have never lied, but to-day I am speaking the profoundest truth, the truth one speaks only once, that brings life or death in its train. . . . Listen; and look at me well; look at me as though you had never seen me before this hour, which is the first, the only one when you truly can love me as I wish to be loved. . . . I speak to you now in the name of the life we have lived together; in the name of all that I am, of all that you are to me! . . . Be capable of believing what, perhaps, can be scarcely believed. . . . I was in this man's power. . . . I had

Monna Vanna .

been handed over to him: he did not come near me, he did not touch me. . . . I come from his tent as from the home of a brother. . . .

GUIDO

Why?

VANNA

Because he loves me. . . .

GUIDO

Ah! so that was what you had to say to us! That was the miracle? . . . Yes, yes, at your very first words I saw there was something strange. . . . It was only a flash, and I paid no heed. . . . I thought that the trouble, the horror had . . . But I see now that we must look into it. . . . So he did not come near you, you say; he did not touch you? . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

No.

GUIDO

Not even kiss you?

VANNA

I gave him one kiss on the brow, which
he returned.

GUIDO

And you can tell this to me! . . .
Vanna, Vanna, has this fearful night
driven you mad?

VANNA

I tell you the truth.

GUIDO

The truth! Great God! it is that,
and that alone, that I seek! But the

Monna Vanna

truth must be human. . . . What! a man who betrays his country, ruins his life, sets all the world against him for ever—and does all this that you should go to his tent alone—this man demands but a kiss on the brow; and comes to us here with you to make us believe it? . . . No, no; we must be just, and not gibe too much at misfortune. . . . If this was all that he asked, why inflict so much misery upon our whole people? And flood me with such despair? . . . This night has lasted ten years: I have scarcely survived it! . . . Ah, had this been all he sought he could have saved us without this torture! . . . We should have welcomed him like a god, like a deliverer! You shake your head. . . . See, the people shall judge, the people shall answer. [*Addressing the crowd.*] Have you heard? I know not why she has said these things; but what she

Monna Vanna

has said is said, and you shall be judges,
. . . You will believe her, perhaps, since
she has saved you. . . If you believe
her, speak. . . Let those who believe
her step out from the crowd! . . . Let
them come to us here, and give the lie
to poor human reason! . . . Let them
come, all those who believe! . . . I am
anxious to look at them, and see what
sort of men they are! . . .

[MARCO *alone stands forth from
the crowd. One hears only
faint, dim, and indistinct mur-
murs.*

MARCO

[*Rushing forward.*] I believe her!

GUIDO

You! You are their accomplice. . .
But the others, the others, where are

Monna Vanna

the rest who believe? . . . [*To VANNA.*]
Have you heard? The people you saved
shrink from the laughter that would burst
from every corner of the hall. . . . The
few who murmured have not dared to
show themselves, and I——

VANNA

They have no cause to believe me; but
you, you who loved me!

GUIDO

Ah, I who loved you should therefore
become your dupe! No, no! Now
listen to me! I speak to you calmly, I
have ceased to be angry. . . . I have
gone through too much, I begin suddenly
to feel old. . . . No, I am not angry.
. . . . There is no anger left in me—
something else will take its place, I

Monna Vanna

suppose—old age, madness, I know not yet. . . . At present I look, I search, I grope in myself, to discover the happiness that once was mine. . . . I have one hope, one hope alone; a hope so frail that I scarcely can grasp it. . . . A word would destroy it; and yet, in my despair, I must make the attempt. . . . Vanna, I was wrong to call back the crowd before knowing. . . . I should have remembered how galling it must be to you to proclaim to them all that that monster had caused you to suffer. . . . Yes, I should have waited until we were alone; then you would have confessed the truth, the horrible truth. But I know it, alas! and the others all know. Of what avail to hide it, Vanna? . . . It is too late. . . . There is no help for it now; and you, too, must understand. . . . In moments like these reason is incapable of—

Monna Vanna

VANNA

Look at me, Guido; all my loyalty, all my strength and my truth are in my eyes now as I speak! . . . The truth, the truth, believe it! . . . He did not touch me.

GUIDO

Good! It is good. It is very good! Now I know all, and all is gone from me. . . . Yes, it is the truth; or rather, it is love. Ah, I understand, you seek to save him. . . . I did not realise that the woman I loved could change so quickly. But not that way can he be saved! [*He raises his voice.*] Hear me, all of you! I will for the last time swear an oath. . . . To restrain myself now demands superhuman effort; my hold on myself is weakening. I make one final effort, there is one moment

Monna Vanna

yet before I break down. . . . That moment I will not lose. . . . Can you hear me, you all; or is my voice grown too weak? Come nearer, nearer! . . . You see this woman, that man; they love each other. . . . Well. Now hear me. I am weighing all my words as scrupulously as one weighs the drug one gives to the dying. . . . These two shall go from me here, with my consent, shall go freely, unmolested, untouched, unharmed. They shall take with them whatever they please. You shall open your ranks to afford them passage. You shall strew their path with flowers, if it so please you. They shall go whithersoever their love may guide their footsteps; and, all I ask in exchange, is that this woman shall first of all tell me the truth, the only possible truth. . . . That is the one thing left to me now that I can still love in her. . . . I demand the

Monna Vanna

truth that she owes me, in exchange for what I will give her. . . . You understand, Vanna? you have only one word to say. . . . All here are witnesses. . . .

VANNA

I have told you the truth. . . . He did not touch me. . . .

GUIDO

It is well. You have spoken—you have condemned him. Now there is nothing more to be done. [*He calls the guards and points to PRINZIVALLE.*] That man belongs to me; take him and bind him; thrust him into the lowest dungeon beneath this hall. I shall go with you. [*To VANNA.*] You will never see him again; but on my return I shall report to you his last words. . . .

Monna Vanna

VANNA

[Throwing herself in the midst of the guards, who are seizing PRINZIVALLE and leading him away.] No, no! I have lied, I have lied! *[To GUIDO.]* Yes, what you say is true! *[Pushing the guards away.]* Go, you must not take what is mine! For he is mine, he belongs to me, not to you! To me alone! It is for me to punish—the coward who when I was helpless, defenceless . . .

PRINZIVALLE

[Trying to drown her voice.] She lies! She lies! She lies to save me, but torture me as you will——

VANNA

Be silent! *[Turning to the crowd.]* He

Monna Vanna

is afraid! [*Approaching PRINZIVALLE, as though to tie his hands.*] Give me cords, give me chains, and irons! Now that I dare speak out my hatred, it is I who shall bind him, I who brought him here! [*Whispering to PRINZIVALLE as she ties his hands.*] Be silent! He saves us, be silent! He has joined us. I belong to you, I love you! I love you, my Gianello! I put these chains on you, but I shall guard you, and free you! We two shall fly together! [*Shouting as though enforcing silence upon PRINZIVALLE.*] Be silent! [*Addressing the crowd.*] He pleads for mercy! [*Uncovering his face.*] Look at his face; it was my dagger, my dagger inflicted that wound! Look at him! He, the coward, the monster! [*Seeing that the guards make a movement as though to remove PRINZIVALLE.*] No, no, leave him to me! He is my victim, my

Monna Vanna

prey! It is I who have bought him!
He belongs to me!

GUIDO

Why did he come, and why did you
lie to me?

VANNA

[*Hesitating and picking her words.*] Why
I lied. . . . I scarcely know, I did not
want to say. . . . Ah well, I must tell
you now. . . . There are times when
one scarcely knows what one does, and
is groping in the dark. . . . Yes, you
shall know, you shall know, for now I
have torn away the veil. . . . It was
the thought of your love, of your
despair, that alarmed me. . . . But I
will tell you. [*In a calmer voice and with
more assurance.*] No, no, I had not the
idea you speak of. . . . I did not bring

· Monna Vanna

him here that we two, you and I, should be publicly avenged in the midst of a crowd ; my idea, perhaps, was less noble, but my love for you prompted me. . . . I yearned to inflict a cruel death upon him, but was anxious also that the horrible memory of this horrible night should not weigh upon you to the end of your days. . . . It was my intention to revenge myself in the dark. . . . To inflict a slow, lingering death upon him. . . . Do you see. . . . Kill him slowly, little by little, till his blood, falling drop by drop, should have wiped out his crime. . . . You would never have known the awful truth, and there would have been no spectre between us. . . . I feared, I confess, that the memory of this would lessen your love for me. . . . I was foolish, I know. . . . It was mad to expect you to believe. . . . But now you shall learn all. . . . [*Addressing the*

· Monna Vanna

crowd.] Hear me, and you shall judge me! What I said before I said for Guido's sake, for the sake of our love. . . . Now I shall tell you all. . . . I tried to kill that man; I wounded him, as you see. . . . But he disarmed me. . . . Then I thought of a deeper revenge, and I smiled on him; and he, the fool, had faith in my smile. . . . And now he is here in his tomb, that I myself shall seal down. . . . I kissed him, and he believed in my kiss; and he followed me, like a lamb. . . . And I hold him now in my hands, and my hands shall close down on him! . . .

GUIDO

[*Approaching.*] Vanna! . . .

VANNA

Look at me well! . . . So mad is

Monna Vanna

still it is life that is right. . . . Collect yourself, Vanna; you will have to lie again, since he refuses to believe. . . .
[*Calling GUIDO.*] Guido, she asks for you. . . . Guido, she is coming to herself. . . .

GUIDO

[*Rushing up and taking her in his arms.*]
My Vanna! See, she smiles! . . .
Vanna, tell me! . . . I never doubted.
. . . Now it is over, and all will be forgotten—wiped away in our good revenge. . . . It was all a bad dream. . . .

VANNA

[*Opening her eyes, and speaking in a feeble voice.*] Where is he? Yes, yes, I know, I remember. . . . Give me the key. . . . The key of his prison; none but myself must . . .

Monna Vanna

GUIDO

The moment the guards come back
they shall bring the key to you, and all
shall be as you wish. . . .

VANNA

I want it for myself alone. So that I
may be quite sure, and that no one else
. . . Yes, it has been a bad dream . . .
but the beautiful one will begin. The
beautiful one will begin . . .

CURTAIN

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